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## **A pedagogy of audio-visual literacy: The promoting and improvement of culture, media and citizenship education in society**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper discusses the connections between social and community development that both students and teachers face and the pedagogy of audio-visual literacy. It highlights that a 'citizenship active approach' can be fostered by the reflection, creation, redesign, and remix, of socially engaged audio-visual messages. The pedagogy of audio-visual literacy provides an important framework for enabling students to improve their citizenship and for educators connecting civics and multi-literacies, including media and semiotic pedagogy.*

**Keywords:** *citizenship and media education, audiovisual literacy, community development, multiliteracies approach*

### **Community development and 'audiovisual culture'**

The promotion and improvement of media, culture and citizenship education is very intensively interconnected with society development and building communities. The role of educational research into relevant characteristics of audio-visual messages continues to rise, and is associated with an increasing spectrum of communication formats, providing for an autonomous, time-based and 'bi-media' paradigm of media communication (Mašek & Zikmundová, 2012).

At present, media and audiovisual media education studies are focused on theory, largely concentrating on the process of establishing meaning in the context of audio-visual and semiotic pedagogy. Researchers explore what contexts of multimodal discourse analysis are applicable in audiovisual education; furthermore, what are the functional and teaching aspects in reflection and design audiovisual and filmic texts, including units that determine meaning of the multimodal audiovisual texts in different genres. Similarly, film and multimodal analysis importance to school practice, which offers and new empirical basis for analysis of film today (cf. Bateman &, Schmidt, 2011). The current methodology of film and audiovisual message analysis is in this context enriched by an analytic approach of the study of film, e.g. using discourse semantics and advanced 'layout structure' for constructing filmic discourse structures, including surveys of the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes of organization etc., to explore the semiotic aspects of the film and its communication of meaning. Moreover, because of the enormous social role of film in all aspects of society today, we must not underestimate the role of school in engaging reflection on audio-visual producers, including film and television companies as well as amateur videos that are 'broadcast' through Internet. Furthermore, an audio-visual education, which aims to promote solutions to society and cultural issues and contribute to the development of the student's receptive and productive activities,

has to explore both educationally controversial and inspirational sequences focused on a range of persuasive, narrative and also on experimental art films.

In this regard, S. C. Noah Uhrig (2005) reported:

The unique properties of attending the cinema can have decisively positive effects on mental health. Cinema attendance can have independent and robust effects on mental wellbeing because visual stimulation can queue a range of emotions and the collective experience of these emotions through the cinema provides a safe environment in which to experience roles and emotions we might not otherwise be free to experience. The collective nature of the narrative and visual stimulation makes the experience enjoyable and controlled, thereby offering benefits beyond mere visual stimulation. Moreover, the cinema is unique in that it is a highly accessible social art form, the participation in which generally cuts across economic lines.

The significant social role of documentary film, through for example contemporary internet video activists, is generally well known, perhaps less so is the use the film for conflict prevention; to promote awareness of critical social issues; and, to stimulate solutions to social problems (Bratic & Schirch, 2007). Similarly, TV social advertising may mobilize communities to prevent domestic violence against children, women and girls and other negative phenomena in society. Likewise, video is increasingly becoming an important part of our everyday human communication, sharing it on digital platforms including social networks. Current digital culture offers both home video stories about personal lives, as has remixing videos which have become a relevant component of society discourse and develop new forms of viral popular culture (Centre for Social Media, 2008), for example, there are many political parodies on 'George Bush Don't Like Black People' from both amateur and professional creators on video websites.

### **Media pedagogy dimensions of audiovisuals**

A pedagogy of audio-visual literacy has to simplify the classical genre classification according to socio-educational goals, especially in terms of the methodology of teaching/learning involving analytical and receptive activities, and to model a pedagogically appropriate paradigm of the important characteristics of audiovisual communication.

According, the author of this paper argues that a pedagogy of audio-visual literacy should distinguish the following basic dimensions which are communicated by audiovisuals (film, video, TV shows, etc.):

**A.** Dimensions of audio-visual forms providing primarily semantically unambiguous messages:

- 'fiction – reality dimension' address the issue of mediating a real or fictional (or hybrid film) content;

- narration as a process of construction of relations between events with primary causal relationships - the film dimension presents to the viewer steps to help him reconstruct the story (Bordwell & Thompsonová, 2011);
- non-narrative dimension deal mainly with associative and categorical audiovisuals (Bordwell & Thompsonová, 2011) and without any story context to be communicated e.g. by educational, documentary and artistic oriented forms;
- rhetorical persuasive forms of an audiovisual communication using rhetoric devices that involves the intent to persuade individuals or social groups;
- interactive messages to provide to user an optional content (especially in the context of narrative forms),
- 'sociological determination' of message content – indicated the target audience as e.g. family movie, gender movies, etc.;
- audiovisuals primarily based on communication of emotions as psychological level of stimulation of emotional cinematic experiences by e.g., entertaining forms of comic, tragic, horror films, etc.;
- level of content determination by individuals or social groups (political, religious, etc.
- 'space-time content arrangement' within the framework of stages of society development to the past, present and future period;
- level of content determination by cultural and geographic influences;
- 'audiovisual stylization' and film art communicating primarily unambiguous meanings.

**B.** The dimensions of experimentally-art forms of film and audiovisual messages primarily in the context of providing semantically ambiguous messages and targeted lack of 'givenness' (Mukařovský, 2000) and focusing on creative experimentation with meaning with regard of its process of formation through experimental and iconoclastic forms (Bendová, 2001). In the 'audiovisual history' we can find out in particular the following trends:

- abstract and structural film, which consists of purely abstract forms and textures and created simply artistic practices such as is known in history 'hand-made film' with the exact (more or less) structural construction;
- new film converting and regulating the initial, previously shot record - 'found-footage film' that can come only from the original material or contains other shots filmed for the movie;
- conceptual film using for formation process for concept ideas through film primarily uses document and record author of 'non-fiction movie' based primarily on the fact of shots, but the concept of editing images and the way the footage is entirely subordinated to the concept of copyright and invention;
- video art uses video and audio recordings, both individually and in conjunction with video technology (video-sculpture, video-installation), or with other types of art (in conjunction with theatre and scenography, interactive game, etc.)

C. The dimensions of relations between two or more media forms in the (multi)media messages mean location and installation of audiovisual things are communicated in context with other types of media to offer intermedia/multimedia and performance information as, for example, in the context of multimedia environment and 'web 2.0' and web art forms of video art, machinima in computer games, etc. Here it is possible to distinguish according as the following types of relationships between the media (Szczepanik, 2002): hypermediality (such as network interconnection media), transmediality (transfer of content to various media), multimodality (in terms of juxtaposition forms of media for the purpose of comparison and evaluation), mixed-media (a combination of media) and according to P. Szczepanik (2002) the intermediality relationship differs from other types of relations by its characteristic as 'indivisible fusion' of all media in the communicated message as opposed to hypermedia, multimedia, etc.

From the above 'dimension list', it is clear that 'audiovisual message' extends to all areas of mediated communication to promote and improve of culture and citizenship education in society and crosses through informative, entertaining, convincing, and also artistic planes of social communication. What is missing in the school's practice? In our opinion is essential to include these 'dimension groups of audio-visuals' systematically, incorporating patterning using semiotic reflection and a multi-analytical approach. Audiovisual (mass)media are a natural part of children's experiences, so young peripients need to understand and accept them critically, with the knowledge of the circumstances and intent of their various messages (Mašek & Zikmundová, 2012).

### **A methodology approach of audiovisual messages analysis**

The changing social environment offers students and teachers a multiplicity of communication channels with increasing cultural and linguistic diversity. A multiliteracies and multimodal analysis approach overcomes the limitations of traditional media literacy. This paper maintains (according New London Group, 1996; Duncum, 2004; Joost, 2008) that applying a multimodal methodology approach to media, multiliteracy and semiotic pedagogy enables teachers and students to achieve success through fulfilling employment and design of their social futures. Furthermore, multimodality is considered as both an analytic methodology and theoretical framework for understanding how people make meaning using the sign systems. As a theoretical framework, multimodality allows us to construct the task of meaning making in terms of the semiotic resources available (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The author's research (Mašek & Zikmundová, 2012) focusing on exploring and evaluation a new paradigm of teaching methodology in audiovisual education within framework of pedagogy of multiliteracies in Czech conditions, dealt with experimental exploration in which through analysis of a TV clip and its re-design, respondent's reflected on domestic violence as well as on the impact of technological progress in media and citizenship education. In order to develop and verify the functionality of complex methodology approach tool, this project had principal goals as follows:

- applying and experimental verifying a multimodal analysis methodology by using concept mapping (Novak & Gowin, 1984) and storyboard design

software into audiovisual media education to support multiliteracy competencies in practical teaching in elementary and secondary schools - to our knowledge, this methodology has not been practiced so far in Czech schooling.

- fostering the purposeful implementation of semiosis into schooling including critical and inspiratory engagement which is necessary for media and citizenship education process – especially using semiotic pedagogy not only to teach students how to decode images but also to show to students how to engage their life experiences with the images they have seen in order to build deeper understandings and develop their own critical thinking abilities.
- using a combination of methods along with computer based concept mapping (Inspiration Software) and storyboard design graphic organizer (Frame Forge 3D Studio) in building meaningful conceptual networks and 3D storyboard shot visuals to establish structure and derive meaning of audiovisual elements/messages by using purposeful nurturing of semiosis. The concept mapping software is developed for the purpose of the using concept mapping technique in processes of thinking and analysing in the framework and has many practical advantages in comparing of using classical concept mapping technique (Mašek & Zikmundová, 2010) and in our case of audiovisual message multimodal analysis it offers an unsophisticated visual possibility especially as follows:
  - to visualize sequence of all film shots with the selection of key ‘static’ frames of visual and audible modes of message,
  - adding a notes and relations about modal and intermodal elements and their communication functions,
  - easy computer rearrangement of all graphical elements to add more nodes and links or to revise a creating concept map with full zoom capability,
  - using pre-defined diagram templates of audiovisual messages and designing own styles like a word processor etc.

Similarly, using FrameForge Previz Studio as previsualization storyboard software for writer/directors of film, video and advertising content is very suitable graphic organizer to create a virtual 3D set in respondent’s computer with the freedom to place any number of virtual cameras in any placement, angle or height desired. Each camera features e.g. full cinematographic Pan, Tilt, Dolly, Zoom, Roll and Crane control with the options to limit focal length to a specific zoom range, furthermore software offer creating a complex virtual mise-en-scène as virtual actors with a choice of poses, facial expressions, clothing, accessories and there are about 800 unique objects that relate to each other like real world. For the purposes of the experiment, this program, probably the best in the world enabled also complete visualization of all relevant modes of scene, including text notes.

#### **A social semiotic approach of clip/storyboard analysis – experimental experience**

Within an experimental process the respondents analysed semiotic unambiguously and clearly communicated social advertisement audiovisual clip containing controversial narrative scenes which warned against domestic violence on children ('Anti-child abuse' in Joost, Buchmüller & Englert, 2009). Video was knowingly based on short ad narrative form with very dramatic, since it offered relatively large variability of cinematography elements - but without video effects. Explicitly violent story contained simple, uncomplicated form of mise-en-scène, which was especially useful for clear multimodal semiotic analysis, including quantification of the various modes of cinematography and mise-en-scène factors (frame size, position, and camera movements, human gestures and facial expressions of actors etc.). Secondly from social and citizenship point of view was very useful the following respondent's activity consisting of original clip re-design, to preserve semantic cohesion of original clip: Warning against domestic violence on children by dramatic story framework! Analysing redesign activities offers a method of understanding how respondents work with social ad meaning through different modes by 3D storyboard software mise-en-scène modelling, a process that is closely related to the nature of video or filmmaking.

In methodology a social semiotic approach of evaluation effects of social engagement and immersive drawing the viewer into the film was based on discoursed audiovisual modes/units will be structured on the basis as follows:

- the Bordwell and Thompson's (2011) *formal analysis of films* that is based on the four key cinematic techniques and aspects used by filmmakers (cf. Mašek & Zikmundová, 2012) as mise-en-scène (all scene actors, props within the frame of the camera etc.), sound (e.g. specifically, music, dialogues, sound effects etc.), editing (techniques after shooting to make completed audiovisual message) and cinematography (camera techniques – camera shots and positions, etc.).
- *on multimodal analysis* implying all the communicative modes that can be identified in an audiovisual message - video clip and offer to researchers a base for research methodology to explore the linguistic way (film)storyboards 'speaks' to its audiences and spectators including discourse relations (cf. Bateman & Schmidt, 2011) between film segments as discourse structures constructed by temporality, spatiality, epistemic status etc., furthermore e.g. how characters and objects are presented in 'semiotic consistency' of audiovisual messages (Tseng, 2012), etc.

Succinctly, in the research context of percipient/creator emotional and social engagement into dramatic story, to explore a given video clip and storyboard content how stimulate viewer empathy with attacked actor – young boy, we developed and used an appropriate content analysis approach that indicated in video clips/storyboards mainly three types of cinematographic 'shot factors' (cf. Koga-Browes, 2009):

- '*proximity*' - described scenes that are diagnosed by proximity of static camera distance or by camera close-up movement (zoom into) that evoke feeling of intimacy between the viewer and depicted actors. This dimension is referred to the work of Edward T. Hall (1990) on proxemics: the

psychology of people's use of space where from the close shot derives a kind of intimacy and the long shot creates impersonality.

- '*superiority*' indicated using camera angle shot that always act to signify meaning e.g. a high angle shot can associate weakness of actor(s), a low angle shot can connote superiority of depicted person.
- '*subjectivity*' - describes position of subjective camera in which percipient feels as a part of the scene. Furthermore, we also included handheld dynamic camera as subjective and dramatic camera movement.

In this research paradigm additionally there other *mis-en-scene* factors were analysed, which stimulated viewer empathy with violent scenes as modes of human (actors) behaviour. Because of the story took place in a simple apartment interior, research activities indicated high variability modes of human gestures and facial expressions of actors above all, which explicitly resulted from the violence content of clip – but according to our assumption, provided information about the commitment of storyboard creator.

### Conclusion

Overall, the digital era offers an advanced role of audiovisual communication in society development as well as the increasing importance the 'audiovisual (not only to the text centred messages) modes' in addition and in relation to other modalities. Furthermore, because processes of creation, re-design and remix of audiovisual messages are by digital devices rapidly simplified in a civic life and educational practice at the turn of the millennium, we must necessarily start the systematic exploration both 'audiovisual multiliteracy' and social semiotic competencies, to be closely linked to the multimodal discourse of mediated content in school practice. As Paul McIlvenny, and Chaim Noy (2011, p. 153) accurately note “This would mean that multimodality would not be a concept referring only to research methods and to “social reality” out there, but to the exchanges and discourse of our scholarly communities and mediated spaces.” They are just a social 'multimodal media', that use many technologies and forms to provide to people organize, edit, and comment on, combine, and share audiovisual and film content e.g. with promotion of civic understanding of the negative social phenomenon in media and citizenship education.

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